

Bradford County Farmer Sees Benefits Of Narrow-Row Corn



CORN TALK NEWS

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

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UNIVERSITY PARK
(Centre Co.) — For one Bradford County dairy farmer, narrow-row corn has proven beneficial by providing a better silage harvest — all without spending a lot of money on adapting to new equipment.

Tim Beardslee, a SulBra Crop Management Association (CMA) farmer based in Springfield Township, Bradford County, harvested 1,800 tons of corn silage on his 100-acre dairy, Lottahill Farms.

And he did that with a year that not only had challenges with excessive moisture, but on hilly conditions.

"We're called Lottahill Farms for that reason — we have a lot of hills," Beardslee told the 60 crop consultants, crop managers, producers, and agri-industry representatives who attended last month's Pennsylvania CMA meeting at the Penn State Scanticon Conference Center in University Park.

Beardslee maintains about 170 head of dairy cattle and about 150 young stock. Corn silage yields were "not too bad this year," he said, considering all the work involved with taking care of the dairy and the immense and time-consuming fieldwork. Corn silage yields went up about 20 percent, he admitted.

At the farm, Beardslee has help from his family and one part-time schoolboy.

He commented on a lot of the

help he received from the SulBra CMA, members who have "great eyes and ears" that you can "bounce things off of" in terms of trying something new, such as narrow row corn.

The corn was planted on 15-inch rows at 34,000 plants per acre. Some corn was planted also on standard 30-inch row spacing at a plant population of 27,000 per acre.

In some cases, corn went on in the narrow row format at 38,000-39,000 plants per acre, according to Mark Madden, Susquehanna County Cooperative Extension agent, who also spoke at the January PCMA conference.

Corn was planted later than normal last year because of the cool, wet conditions early in the growing season. About 60 percent of the farm is in no-till, according to Beardslee.

When planting the narrow-row corn, the farmers used a simple four-row planter doubling back on 30-inch centers.

"We didn't do too bad going back over the old rows," Beardslee said.

Actually, the Bradford County farmer admitted that weed control was better in narrow rows than in the conventional 30-inch rows. Narrow row corn provides shading, keeping weed challenges down. No change was necessary to their equipment, and there was very little loss of seed placement or seed amount by going back.

Much of the corn was

planted by June 12 on farm conditions that were wet and "very rocky," said Beardslee.

"We haul manure daily," he said. They use the nitrogen quickest to determine how much starter urea fertilizer they need at planting.

"We probably could have used more (urea) to improve the yield," he said.

The family continues to increase the herd size. The barn was built for 100 cows but now houses 140 milking cows. "We've had to (increase the



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herd)," Beardslee said, to keep the farm profitable. "On our farm, we believe you have to make money off of it, otherwise why else do it?"

One of the biggest challenges was simply learning how to accurately aim the four-row planter, which proved challenging, according to Beardslee.

Madden indicated that in the northeastern part of the state, there are 35,000 acres on corn silage, and farms can learn to "do more with less" as acreage dwindles.

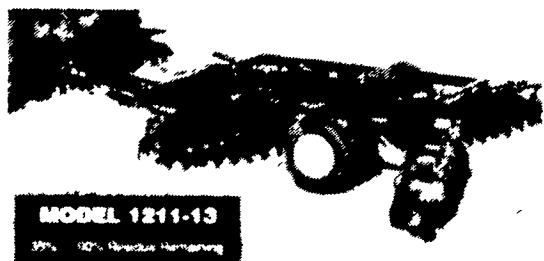
Greg Roth, Penn State corn specialist, noted at the PCMA conference that farmers can achieve a 10 percent increase in yields if using narrow-row corn, and "more as we go north." The southeastern part of the state wouldn't see the same types of benefits as the "northern Pennsylvania folks considering corn silage," Roth noted. However, some farms in the southeast — a 500-acre farm in York County and a 2,200-acre farm also in the southeast — are trying out narrow-row corn with success.



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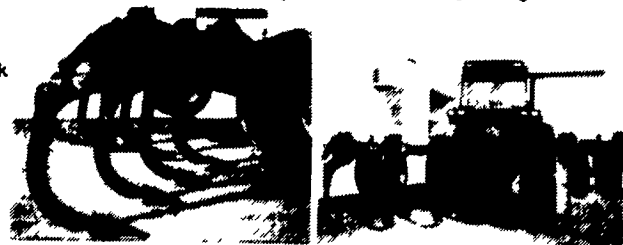
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